



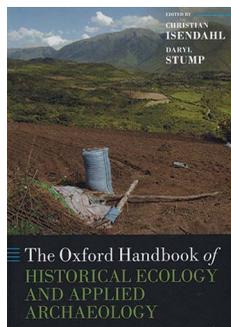
## New Book Chronicle

Claire Nesbitt

On 10 June 2020 Britain passed an energy milestone by having gone two months without burning coal to generate power. Figures show that 2019 saw renewable sources produce more energy than fossil fuel sources in the UK for the first time (Evans 2019). With this and other issues concerning the sustainability of the Earth's resources ever present, it is perhaps pertinent for this issue of NBC to begin by considering two books that examine the role of archaeology in helping to provide insights into sustainability and resilience. These volumes explore the value of archaeology not only in understanding our past, but also in shaping our future and addressing the question of sustainability through the complex adaptive networks of historical ecology and applied archaeology.

CHRISTIAN ISENDAHL & DARYL STUMP (ed.). 2019. *The Oxford handbook of historical ecology and applied archaeology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-967269-1 hardback £110.

SANDER VAN DER LEEUW. 2020. *Social sustainability, past and future: undoing unintended consequences for the Earth's survival*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-108-59524-3 hardback £75 & Open Access.



In their *Oxford handbook of historical ecology and applied archaeology* editors Christian Isendahl and Daryl Stump have marshalled 30 papers into four sections that deal respectively with: (I) the potential and drawbacks of historical ecology and applied archaeology as approaches to contemporary global challenges; (II) their methodologies and applications; (III) the reconstruction of past technologies; and (IV) how these may be implemented in modern infrastructure planning. The volume has a vast scope incorporating historical archaeology, ethnoarchaeology, geoarchaeology, environmental archaeology, bioarchaeology, archaeobotany and zooarchaeology.

The remit for each contributor was a challenging one: “to examine the ways in which data from the past has been, or could be, used to benefit communities today” (p. xviii).

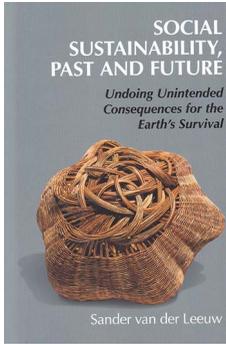
Stump and Isendahl's introduction to the collection as whole—for each of the four parts of the volume also has its own introduction written by the editors—outlines the scope of the volume and carefully defines some of the terms that may have more specific meanings than are implied by their use in common parlance. Here the scene is set for the complex range of techniques, concepts and approaches that comprise this handbook, which is aimed at anyone who wants to explore the potential of applied archaeology, and for those working in fields that use historical data to assess long-term trends. The introductions to

each part of the volume serve as useful handrails to guide the reader through the key themes highlighted by the various contributors, and offer some context for each section.

The volume begins with chapters that consider the disciplinary intersection between historical ecology and applied archaeology, shining a light on the importance of collaborations between research practitioners and land managers (Carole L. Crumley), and the potential of archaeology to help tackle practical problems in the modern world, such as challenges to food security (Paul E. Minnis). Paul J. Lane's chapter considers the difficulties that exist in cross-disciplinary communications, particularly in the use of terminology, with descriptors such as 'long term' having a multitude of definitions in the literature; Lane laments the lack of dialogue between disciplines, noting that this tends to hamper much-needed transdisciplinary perspectives. William E. Doolittle (Chapter 3) also cautions against the use of ill-judged terminology and goes on to discuss some of the most commonly used and abused terms: 'anthropocene', 'sustainability' and 'adaptation'. In Chapter 5, Anneli Ekblom considers the impact of landscape management and conservation in Africa on the communities living in the conservation zones, exploring savannisation of the Guinean West African forests, savannah forest dynamics in Mozambique and what was thought to be degradation of the East African landscape due to farming practices. Ekblom's research challenges the assumption that farming communities have caused deforestation, demonstrating that the decline of forests was not contemporaneous with the expansion of farming and may have been caused by a series of droughts. Her work highlights the need for a fuller understanding of landscape history and for recognition that landscapes are constantly in flux. Anabel Ford and Keith C. Clark (Chapter 9) deconstruct a similar assumption about deforestation in El Pilar, Belize, which has been attributed to traditional Maya farming practices. Ford and Clark present evidence that the Maya *milpa* system (a forest garden cycle that uses a multi-crop polycultivation system to transform fields into forests over time) has been misjudged and was in fact a sustainable model that created a dynamic variety of environments.

The volume contains a diverse array of interesting case studies such as Federica Sulas's use of environmental data to understand the landscape of Aksum, Ethiopia (Chapter 13), and Lorenzo Caponetti's experiment in sustainable water management at a farm in Tuscania, Italy (Chapter 21). In Chapter 28, E. Christian Wells calls for archaeologists to look forward as well as back and to connect the past to the present, as he discusses the problems inherent in contemporary global change that might be addressed by archaeologists considering aspects of social science that are often overlooked in environmental studies: culture, power and history. Wells concludes that by integrating these factors into narratives on sustainability, archaeology has the power to highlight the significance of social inequalities and their role in shaping responses to environmental change at both community and government level.

Isendahl and Stump's concluding chapter reflects on what can be achieved by the approaches detailed by the contributors, and considers the potential of historical ecology and applied archaeology, particularly in light of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. As the editors conclude, "It remains the concern of archaeologists, historical ecologists, and scholars of other fields within the historical sciences to champion and advance the potential of knowledge about the past generated from research to address contemporary challenges, and by doing so contribute to the unlocking of alternative futures" (p. 595).



Sander van der Leeuw also reflects on the past to inform the future in his volume *Social sustainability, past and future*, which considers sustainability through the lenses of social science and complex systems theory. The opening chapter introduces the nature of the book, describing it as comprising a series of stepping-stones, coherent in and of themselves, and each part of a network of loosely connected issues. Overall, the book makes the case that sustainability and related issues such as climate change are part of a more fundamental problem facing the planet, which is societal in nature rather than environmental and stems from complex social dynamics. This is summed up neatly as “the crisis of unintended consequences”

(p. 10).

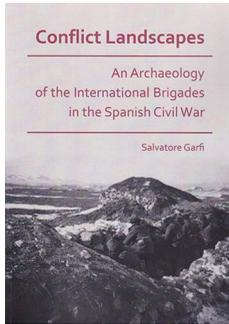
The volume represents 30 years’ worth of research organised into three broad sections. The first puts sustainability issues into context; the book is woven around six key points that inform van der Leeuw’s approach. These are that we should be looking at dynamic systems diachronically; the need to recognise the limitations of human cognition; that we need to recognise that change is the permanent state of the world and that stability is an idea we strive to create; that innovation is not necessarily our salvation; and that we need to question why we endlessly battle the environment rather than work with it.

Part Two begins with a dexterous and succinct study of societal development from the biological evolution of the human brain to the fall of the Roman Empire and then goes on to develop the social systems approach, using case studies to demonstrate the alternating constraints of energy and information processing on the coevolutionary process. Having set out these case studies in Part Two, van der Leeuw uses Part Three to discuss how science may be able to contribute to shaping a future that must inevitably deal with significant environmental, socioeconomic and political changes. Chapter 16 considers a range of global factors affecting sustainability to determine whether we are reaching a global societal tipping point; these include: planetary environmental risk barriers; demography and health; ageing; migration; food security; fossil energy and wealth discrepancy—to name but a few. Having established that the tipping point is in fact “a mega-mega-tipping point” (p. 339), Chapter 19, ‘Is there a way out?’, explores bottom-up changes in societal behaviours that can bring about change at a global scale. Effecting these changes requires individual engagement with and participation in the management of society, restructuring communities based on grass-roots initiatives and re-evaluating the role of scientists in society; this involves repairing the erosion of confidence in the scientific community that has occurred in some Western countries.

The core messages of this engaging volume are that linear arguments about cause and effect are unhelpful and that a complex systems approach is more appropriate for understanding our current global predicament. Van der Leeuw sees in the current global situation an opportunity, to mobilise societies to change, to implement different types of economies and lifestyles that are sustainable, and to reduce poverty. He leaves the reader with an explanation for his long-term optimism about humanity. Both this volume and the Oxford handbook seek to establish archaeology as a discipline that has a major contribution to make to society in terms of the future, and is not simply concerned with studying the past for its own sake.

## War-scape

SALVATORE GARFI. 2019. *Conflict landscapes: an archaeology of the international brigades in the Spanish civil war*. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78969-134-4 paperback £35.



War might be the cause or consequence of instability in society; with the conflicts of the twentieth century increasingly being examined from an archaeological perspective, one area that has seen less discussion but is ripe for new approaches is that of the lived experience of war on the front lines, not necessarily the conflict, but the everyday experience of existing and surviving in a conflict zone.

*Conflict landscapes* is an archaeological exploration of the landscape of the Spanish Civil War occupied by the International Brigades; its focus is the materiality of the landscapes (or war-scapes) of Zaragoza in Aragón, as places not only of conflict, but also of settlement, as an environment in which soldiers lived out their everyday lives during the conflict. In a novel application of evidence, Garfi includes historical photography as an archaeological resource, viewing each image much like a sondage, a momentary “slice of space as well as time” (p. 9). Still more avant-garde is his reliance on period literature, especially George Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia* as an analytical resource to understand the war-scape of 1930s Spain.

The volume is divided into three parts, introducing the project and offering an overview of the Spanish Civil War, contextualising the trench systems and interpreting photographs and literature as archaeological evidence, respectively. Chapter 3 outlines the fascinating nature of trenches, which occupy a place half way between architecture and earthworks, and which developed rapidly from rudimentary ditches to complex networks of trenches that included designated areas for specific activities (observation, supervision, communication) and hierarchically separated areas for officers, NCOs and troops. The volume considers the history of this so-called ‘digging-in’ from the sixteenth century through the Russo-Japanese war and the Western Front to those of twentieth-century Spain. During the Spanish Civil War the field fortifications were driven by the Nationalists’ colonial experience in North Africa and created a web of defence that featured front-line outposts connected to and supported by strongholds to the rear. Chapter 4 details the survey methodology and results gathered during the field seasons. This provides a detailed description of the entrenchments of both Nationalists and Republicans in the area east of Zaragoza in Aragón, revealing “an architectural confection representing a created ‘anthropocosmos’ (or world of man) with the equivalent of public spaces, communal or shared spaces, and private spaces” (p. 70). These differentiated zones within the trenches became the foci of intense experience during the conflict, and it is the reconstruction of that experience which is the aim of Part 3.

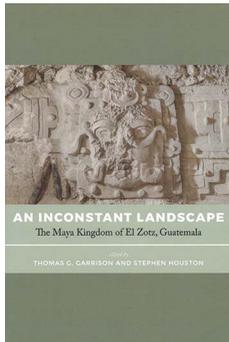
The lived experience of soldiers in the trenches of the Mediana Lines on the Aragón front is considered in Chapter 5 through the lens of landscape and settlement archaeology. The Mediana Lines covered an area of 56km<sup>2</sup> and were maintained for six months between September 1937 and March 1938. This chapter draws heavily on the writing of George Orwell,

who served with the POUM (the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification), among other eyewitnesses to furnish the architectural description of the trenches with materiality and human experience. Orwell's writing offers a uniquely personal perspective on life in the Mediana entrenchments; this is complemented in Chapter 6 by 38 photographs of life on the front line. Garfi's volume is novel and challenges the traditional presentation of war as a grand narrative, exploring instead the harsh and visceral experience of a war lived on the battlefield.

## Dynastic equilibriums

THOMAS G. GARRISON & STEPHEN HOUSTON (ed.). 2018. *An inconstant landscape: the Maya kingdom of El Zotz, Guatemala*. Louisville: University Press of Colorado; 978-1-60732-763-9 hardback \$90.

ALAIN GEORGE & ANDREW MARSHAM (ed.). 2018. *Power, patronage, and memory in early Islam: perspectives on Umayyad elites*. Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-049893-1 hardback £64.

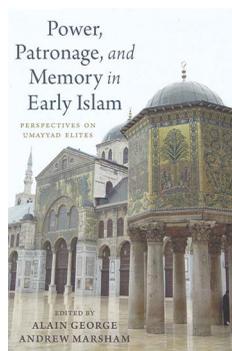


Our next two volumes chart the fortunes of two very different dynasties, the Maya kingdom of El Zotz in Guatemala and the Umayyad Dynasty of the Islamic Empire. Thomas Garrison and Stephen Houston's volume, *An inconstant landscape*, reports on six seasons of research and excavations at the Maya site of El Zotz, the seat of the Pa'ka'n Dynasty during the Classic period. The volume comprises 13 chapters divided into two broad sections. Part I includes six chapters that detail the culture history of the Pa'ka'n Dynasty, while Part II focuses on technical analysis at El Zotz. The volume is intended, in substitution for an excavation monograph, to report on the excavations at El Zotz in a timely fashion and to bring together concise

reports from the archaeologists working on the site. It certainly achieves this, with a balance of discussion and data providing a detailed yet accessible report on the archaeology of El Zotz and its significance in the region. Chapter 1 by Houston, Garrison and Edwin Román introduces the site and its history, and details the Proyecto Arqueológico El Zotz. Also included is a radiocarbon appendix listing all the radiocarbon samples taken by the project between 2008 and 2016, this offers a chronological framework at the start of the volume within which the subsequent chapters can be situated. The remaining chapters in Part I are arranged chronologically, beginning with James A. Doyle and Rony E. Piedrasanta (Chapter 2) discussing the dynamics of the Preclassic period in the Buenavista Valley to the establishment of the acropolis at El Zotz in the Early Classic period. Román, Garrison and Houston (Chapter 3) then take the reader through the beginnings of royal dynasty in the region in the Early Classic period. This includes precis of the significant regional sites, El Palmar, Bejucal and El Zotz. Although epigraphy does not reveal details of the rulers of El Zotz, funerary evidence suggests that Burial 9 represents a royal tomb—indeed, the earliest and most intact tomb at the site—thought to be the founder of the Pa'ka'n Dynasty.

Nicholas P. Carter, Yeny M. Gutiérrez Castillo and Sarah Newman guide us through the Late Classic period of the site, a time of monumental construction that appears closely tied to the rather fluid geopolitical climate in the central Maya Lowlands during this time. El Zotz's fortunes seem to have been linked to their choice of allies and trading partners. The fading fortunes of the site in the Terminal Classic and Early Postclassic periods are detailed in Chapter 5 (Sarah Newman, Jose Luis Garrido and Nicholas P. Carter) and Chapter 6 (Melanie J. Kingsley and Laura Gámez).

The second part of the volume, presenting the technical analyses of archaeological work at El Zotz, comprises detailed data analysis and descriptions of fieldwork, with reports focused on the environmental sampling (Timothy Beach, Sheryl Luzzadder-Beach, Colin Doyle and William Delgado); the ceramics (Ewa Czapiewska-Halliday, Nicholas P. Carter, Melanie J. Kingsley, Sarah Newman and Alyce de Carteret); lithics (Zachary Hruby); architecture (Cassandra Mesick Braun); and bioarchaeology and mortuary remains (Andrew K. Scherer). The volume closes with a chapter by Garrison and Houston taking a regional view of the Pa'ka'n Dynasty, which takes the form of a cultural synthesis of the Buenavista Valley from 1300 BC to AD 1500; what emerges is a picture of an adaptive, politically agile population whose fortunes were very much tied to their more powerful neighbours, but who expressed a distinct identity.



In contrast to the Pa'ka'n Dynasty, the Umayyad caliphate was relatively short-lived, lasting just over a century from AD 644–750. Nonetheless, in that time the Umayyads governed a vast empire. Alain George and Andrew Marsham's volume *Power, patronage, and memory in early Islam* brings together a collection of essays offering perspectives on the Umayyad Dynasty. Based on a 2011 conference hosted at Edinburgh University, the volume includes 11 papers broadly divided into representations of caliphal authority and legitimacy in text and images (Part I), evidence for Umayyad patronage of large residences and agricultural estates in Greater Syria, often referred to as the 'desert castles' (Part II), and historical memory (Part III), which considers the use of

Umayyad sources in other communities such as in Abbasid Iraq and Christian communities ruled by the caliphate. This section includes a chapter on modern portrayals of the Umayyads in a contemporary Arab television drama (Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen).

Following a brief introduction by the editors, Andrew Marsham opens the volume with his chapter considering the origins of the Umayyad's title 'God's Caliph'. Various explanations of the origin of this title are explored including Roman imperial titulature, Qur'anic ideology and pre-Islamic Arabian inscriptions. Drawing on texts, inscriptions and numismatic evidence, Marsham concludes that the epithet is not necessarily derived from Roman usage, and that the idea of rulers as deputies of the gods had an ancient heritage in the Middle East.

Alain George (Chapter 2) continues the theme of how power might be suggested or reinforced, this time in imagery as he explores the symbolism in the decoration of the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus, both built when the Umayyad Dynasty were seeking to reinforce their power and the legitimacy of Islam. The architecture and iconography of these buildings, George argues, combine suggestions of both the heavenly and the imperial, designed to make the two inseparable. The use of architecture to assert traditions and achieve

a political impact is explored further by Robert Hillenbrand in his paper focusing on the art and architecture of Qaṣr Al-Ḥayr Al-Gharbī, one of the so-called ‘desert castles’. Hillenbrand’s detailed examination of the site leads him to the conclusion that the palace reflects caliph Hishām’s attempt to balance the competing cultures that pulled the empire in different directions.

The final part of the volume comprises contributions that consider narratives of the Umayyads, both historic and modern, in text and dramatic portrayals. Antoine Borrut seeks out early Islamic historiography and questions how we know what we think we know about the first Islamic dynasty. Nicola Clarke meanwhile considers how different narratives of the Islamic conquest of Iberia were used to legitimise and reinforce Umayyad rule. The final chapter by Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen explores how the Umayyad period is understood by Arab Muslims as portrayed through television drama, and discovers that “the Umayyads, with their nationalist appeal and complex Islamic legacy, are once again at the centre of the struggle over Arab historical consciousness” (p. 331).

Despite the varied focus and approaches of the books explored in this NBC, they emphasise how, in myriad ways, archaeology demonstrates its value to the modern world. It is only by interrogating the relationships between ecology, power and resilience in past societies that we are able to reflect on the challenges facing the contemporary world more fully.

## Reference

Evans, S. 2019. Analysis: UK renewables generate more electricity than fossil fuels for first time. Available at:

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-uk-renewables-generate-more-electricity-than-fossil-fuels-for-first-time> (accessed 22 June 2020).

## Books received

This list includes all books received between 1 March 2020 and 30 April 2020. Those featuring at the beginning of New Book Chronicle have, however, not been duplicated in this list. The listing of a book in this chronicle does not preclude its subsequent review in *Antiquity*.

### European pre- and protohistory

KURT J. GRON, LASSE SORENSEN & PETER ROWLEY-CONWY (ed.). *Farmers at the frontier: a pan European perspective on*

*Neolithisation*. 2020. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-7892-5140-1 hardback £45.

### Mediterranean archaeology

GREG WOOLF. *The life and death of ancient cities: a natural history*. 2020. Oxford: Oxford

University Press; 978-0-1996-6473-3 hardback £25.

## The Classical world

MARTIN BERNAL. *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic roots of Classical civilization volume II: the archaeological and documentary evidence*. 2020. New Brunswick (NJ): Rutgers University Press; 978-1-9788-0427-2 paperback \$44.95.

SUSANNE MORAW. *Die Odyssee in der Spätantike: Bildliche und literarische Rezeption*. 2020. Turnhout: Brepols; 978-2-503-58379-2 paperback €120.

## The Roman world

KEVIN BUTCHER (ed.). *Debasement: manipulation of coin standards in pre-modern monetary systems*. 2020. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-7892-5398-6 hardback £50.

ANN OLGA KOLOSKI-OSTROW. *The archaeology of sanitation in Roman Italy: toilets, sewers and water systems*. 2020. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press; 978-1-4696-4553-7 paperback \$35.

## Anatolia, Levant and the Middle East

FRÉDÉRIC ABBÈS. *Vivre la steppe: Qdeir, un campement néolithique en Syrie*. 2019. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne; 979-10-351-0316-3 paperback €19.

N. BORRELLI & G. SCAZZOSI (ed.). *After the harvest: storage practices and food processing in Bronze Age Mesopotamia*. 2020. Turnhout: Brepols; 978-2-503-58378-5 paperback €75.

JODI MAGNESS. *Masada: der Kampf der Juden gegen Rom*. 2020. Darmstadt: WBG; 978-3-8062-4077-1 hardback €36.

KAREN RADNER. *A short history of Babylon*. 2020. New York: Bloomsbury; 978-1-83860-170-8 paperback \$19.95.

## Africa and Egypt

CARL GRAVES (ed.). *BEC 4: Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> British Egyptology Congress*. 2020. London: Egypt Exploration Society; 978-0-8569-8243-9 paperback £25.

WOLFRAM GRAJETZKI. *The people of the Cobra Province in Egypt: a local history, 4500 to 1500 BC*. 2020. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-7892-5421-1 hardback £55.

YUSUF M. JUWAYEYI. *Archaeology and oral tradition in Malawi: origins and early history of the Chewa*. 2020. Woodbridge: James Curry; 978-1-8470-1253-1 hardback £60.

MARTIN STERRY & DAVID J. MATTINGLY (ed.). *Urbanisation and state formation in the ancient Sahara and beyond*. 2020. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-1084-9444-1 hardback £135.

## Americas

ANA DÍAZ (ed.). *Reshaping the world: debates on Mesoamerican cosmologies*. 2020. Louisville: University of Colorado Press; 978-1-60732-953-4 Ebook \$35.95.

CHRISTIAN MADER. *Sea shells in the mountains and llamas on the coast: the economy of the Paracas*

*Culture (800–200 BC) in southern Peru*. 2020. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz; 978-3-447-11327-4 hardback €98.

EDUARDO WILLIAMS. *Ancient west Mexico in the Mesoamerican ecumene*. 2020. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-7896-9353-9 paperback \$84.

## Oceania

PIERRE PETREQUIN, ANNE-MARIE PETREQUIN & ALEXANDRE PELLETIER-MICHAUD. *Ecology of a tool: the ground stone axes of Irian Jaya (Indonesia)*.

2020. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-7892-5386-3 hardback £45.

## Byzantine, early medieval and medieval

MARK MALTBY & MARK BRISBANE (ed.). *Animals and archaeology in northern medieval Russia: zooarchaeological studies in Novgorod and its region*.

2020. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-8421-7277-3 hardback £65.

## Historical archaeology

SYLVIE DUMONT. *Vrysaki: a neighborhood lost in search of the Athenian agora*. 2020. Princeton (NJ): American School of Classical Studies at Athens; 978-0-87661-969-8 hardback £70.

TODD A. HANSON. *The archaeology of the Cold War*. 2019. Gainesville: University Press of Florida; 978-0-8130-6805-3 paperback \$24.95.

## Heritage, conservation and museums

DENNIS HARDING. *Re-writing history: changing perceptions of the past*. 2020. Oxford: Oxford

University Press; 978-0-1988-1773-4 hardback \$90.

## General

TERRY IRVING. *The fatal lure of politics: the life and thought of Vere Gordon Childe*. 2020. Clayton:

Monash University; 978-1-925835-75-5 Ebook \$39.95.